Chapter 12

The Demise of the Cinematic Zombie

From the Golden Age of Hollywood to the 1940s

Louise Fenton

The word "zombie" inspires images of the living dead. Shuffling decaying corpses seeking human flesh. This was not the early representation of the zombie. This essay examines the rise of the cinematic zombie in the 1930s to a culturally contextualized entity in 1940s horror and its subsequent demise at the end of the decade. These early representations of the living dead are an integral part of Vodou and Haiti and throughout this essay will be discussed within the more popularized term of Voodoo. The zombie evolved during the Golden Age of Hollywood in the 1930s; however, it was the zombie of the 1940s that placed the living dead in the imagination of mass audiences. It was during the 1940s that the zombie featured in a number of movies in a variety of guises, from the almost comedic offering of *King of the Zombies* (Jean Yarbrough, 1941) with a Nazi zombie master, through to *The Face of Marble* (William Beaudine, 1945), which sees the living dead being created by science. This essay observes how the zombie began its appearance as part of Haitian culture in the 1930s, affirming its status in the early to mid-1940s and then, as it became more detached from its cultural context, falling out of favor.

In 1929 William Seabrook wrote *The Magic Island.* The most repeated accolade given to this publication was that it introduced zombies to English speaking audiences, and in many references it is given the credit for the first use of the word "zombie." This is not accurate, as the word *zombi* was used in Moreau Saint-Méry's *A Civilisation that Perished: The Last Years of White Colonial Rule in Haiti* (published in 1792) which describes *zombis* as a "Creole word that means spirit" ([1797–1998] 1985: 321). *A Civilisation that Perished* was written in French and was not widely read. In 1886 George W. Cable wrote an essay, "Creole Slave Songs," which was published in *The Century Magazine*; this features the word *zombi* when

describing "The Voodoos" (1886: 815). Then in 1890 the word *zombi* appears in Lafcadio Hearn's *Two Years in the French West Indies*, an account of life in Martinique within a Creole society ([1890] 2001: 142). These early references do not link zombies with the living dead: the earliest accounts of the revival of the dead were made in Captain Mayne Reid's 1883 novel *The Maroon: A Tale of Voodoo and Obeah* and, in 1912, Stephen Bonsal's *The American Mediterranean*, which both describe the practice of raising a person from the dead but without the use of the word "zombie." It was then William Seabrook's book that brought together the living dead and the word "zombie" in 1929, positioning it within Vodou and Haiti.

The Magic Island was to be the direct influence for the first Voodoo zombie movie in the "talkie" era, *White Zombie* (Victor Halperin, 1932), which resulted in Voodoo and zombies being introduced to mass cinema audiences, transforming the imagined into visual horror. It is important to note that these early zombie offerings were entwined with Voodoo and so it is not possible to discuss the zombie in isolation from this context.

The literary representations of Vodou culture, including zombies, since the mid-nineteenth century were instrumental in creating Voodoo in the imagination of readers of popular fiction and nonfiction. The progression from page to screen was inevitable. These representations lie predominantly in the horror genre during the earlier years before being taken up by the comedy and thriller genres later in the twentieth century. This essay considers the productions of Britain and America; however, it should be noted that there were many other countries adding to the horror genre and the sub-genre of zombie movies.

The silent era provided the foundation for the horror genre to build upon and zombies were to feature as subject matter from early in this stage of cinematic production. The audience demand for new movies surpassed expectation, and the studios needed to increase their production. To satisfy the demand they were constantly seeking material. The publication of *The Magic Island* in 1929 and its subsequent success provided an opportunity for zombies and Voodoo to be entered into cinematic representations at the start of the "Golden Age" of Hollywood.

ZoMbies in THe goLDen Age oF HoLLywooD

Rick Worland describes the period 1931–1939 as "one of the most fruitful and important periods of the American horror film coming soon after the arrival of sound and the Crash of 1929" (2007: 55). It could also be argued that the forties were then just as important as they consolidated the horror genre in the public imagination. The 1930s did have a strong impact because

of their historical place, following the Great Depression; however, increased studio output led to a wider scope within the horror genre throughout the 1940s. Mark Jancovich (2002) credits some of the 1940s films as "having significance" due to the conflicts they highlight between "modern rational America and a traditional and superstitious old world" when they bring the horror of the exotic to the "normal and everyday" (2002: 3). This is important to note, as this essay considers the cultural context of the zombie being overlooked in favor of associating the zombie with contemporary societal horrors towards the end of the 1940s. The Great Depression did have an impact and Hollywood had to scale back production; it was at this time that there was an increase in production from studios dubbed the "Poverty Row" studios. These were companies, such as Monogram and Republic, which were producing low budget movies from the end of the silent era through to the 1950s. The Depression was a period of economic crisis and unemployment, but audiences flocked to the cinema as a way of escape. It was the only luxury for many, and the demand for movies was high.

The first mention of Voodoo in a "talkie" came in the 1930 production of *The Sea Bat* (Wesley Ruggles). This film was set on a fictional island called "Portuga." The opening credits describe the film's mise-en-scène: "Through the night . . . the weird chant of Voodoo worship. Through the day . . . the weird industry of Sponge Diving." The Voodoo content is minimal and zombies were not to feature within this context.

The first full-length Voodoo movie that was to incorporate zombies was *White Zombie* in 1932. This was a low-budget movie that borrowed sets from many of the previous Gothic horrors such as *Dracula* (Tod Browning, 1931) and *Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1931), and it was made entirely on the Universal Studios lot. The movie was based loosely on a play called *Zombie* (1932) by Kenneth Webb, which was influenced by William Seabrook's book, *The Magic Island.*

Many scholarly references to *White Zombie* identify *The Magic Island* as the influence and inspiration for the narrative. Yet, although *The Magic Island* was the basis for the play which was to inspire the film, there was no acknowledged link between the film and the book. Gary Rhodes (2001) discusses an interview with Victor Halperin, the film's director, in which Halperin recalled the origins of the story and the script for *White Zombie* being developed with verification from U.S. Marines who were based in Haiti. There is no mention of *The Magic Island* or any record of Halperin or his writer, Garnett Weston, consulting with the Marines, so the only true credit to the story rests with Victor Halperin himself (Neilson in Rhodes, 2001).

"Voodoo" was a word in wide use and, although *White Zombie* is about Voodoo, the word is not used to describe the beliefs within the movie. However, zombies are part of the narrative from the onset. The opening scenes show

a burial at crossroads with the diegetic sounds of chanting and drumming, and we see the main characters, Neil (John Harron) and Madeline (Madge Bellamy), inside the carriage. The details in this setting added "authenticity" to the subject, as there were burials at crossroads in rural Haiti in an attempt to stop the Bokors[1] raising the dead to create zombies. The driver explains that the gathering in the road is a funeral. Neil apologises to his fiancée for "not such a cheerful introduction for you to *Our* West Indies." His adding the colonial reference to the West Indies (Haiti had achieved independence many years before) is indicative of the Western socio-cultural sentiment that believed Haiti was still a colony despite having independence for over a century. Haiti was a place definitely not belonging to "Us" and certainly not "Ours." As O'Callaghan (2004) suggests, there was a fear of the ideas and "anti-European sentiments" moving from "Them" to "Us" (2004: 90). It is this fear that may have instigated the reference to Haiti belonging to "Us," of being "Ours," creating for viewers the security of knowing that ultimately there was a "civilised" structure in place of European rule. As Homi Bhabha ([1994] 2005) discusses when referring to the question of "otherness," colonial discourse must "construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" ([1994] 2005: 101).

Zombies are identified by the carriage driver who explains to Neil and Madeline that "they are the living dead, they are corpses made to work in the sugar fields at night." The character of the carriage driver was played by an actor named Clarence Muse. Muse was an African American actor/composer, and although his part was a stereotypical trade for a black character, a laboring job, there is nothing demeaning about him. He wears smart clothes and is well spoken within the narrative. It was his account of zombies within the narrative that gave an explanation to the audience, some of whom may not have understood what a zombie was. This description of the zombie derived from literary descriptions and unusually links them directly to Haiti later in the narrative. This link would be lost in the years that followed as the zombie evolved into a flesh-eating creature with little or no associations with Voodoo, Vodou or Haiti. The zombies in this film are mute, a trend that was to continue until the 1960s.

The film's location is identified as Haiti by the Doctor (Joseph Cawthorn), contextualizing the zombies and ritualistic practices. When he is asked within the narrative by Neil if he believes in zombies, he responds: "Haiti is full of nonsense and superstition with all of it mixed up in a lot of mysteries. Turn your hair curly. I've been a missionary here for twenty years and at times I don't know what to think." The character of the Doctor is also a missionary and so combines both the colonial and spiritual institutions within Haiti. This dichotomy is present in *I Walked with a Zombie* where the cinematic

representations of Voodoo are at times ridiculing and infantilizing the practices, as Vodou was not deemed a religion at the time of these productions.

This movie makes several remarks relating to slavery, highlighting the racist attitude of the time, and to the ambivalent feelings towards Haiti. When referring to the zombies in his factory, the zombie master, Murder Legendre, tells Mr Beaumont (Robert Frazer) that "You could make use of men like mine. They don't mind long hours." Later, when discussing his options on how to rescue Madeline with the Doctor, Neil is told "There are superstitions on Haiti that the natives brought back from Africa," and Neil responds with the line "Surely you don't think she's alive in the hands of natives? Better dead than that!" This fear of "natives" is evident in a number of early films including the first mention of Voodoo in a "talkie" in *The Sea Bat*. "Native" was a term applied to any culture other than Western culture and the essence and justification of colonialism and Empire was that of "civilising savages." There is a constant reminder throughout *White Zombie* of harmful superstitions, bringing the fear of the exotic other to the American homeland. It is worth considering here that America occupied Haiti in 1915 and so this event would be in the living memory of many of the viewing public, reinforcing this notion of a land that might have been "ours." The zombies in the film are both black and white with some in blackface. They all respond to commands, are dressed in ragged clothing and walk slowly, not shuffling here, but with direction. Despite the racist undercurrent to *White Zombie*, the film treated Voodoo in a much less demeaning way than some that were to follow and firmly placed zombies within their cultural context. It allowed the religion some credibility even though it did represent it as an evil and harmful practice.

White Zombie was a box office success, if not a hit with the critics, and it remains key that the Voodoo in this film provides one of the only representations that placed the religion in Haiti. It is also one of the few films that linked zombies with Haiti and Voodoo. Victor Halperin did go on to direct another horror film in 1936, *Revolt of the Zombies*, a title that offered promise of wholesale social upheaval on the part of the racialized zombie. This followed on from *White Zombie* and yet did not feature Haiti or Voodoo. There is much cultural confusion within this film as the narrative features an international, and mainly colonial, expedition to Cambodia to destroy a spell that enables the creation of zombies during World War I. This materializes not in the form of creating the living dead, but of creating a state of hypnosis. This was a weak follow up to what was arguably one of the best Voodoo films ever made, as it abandoned the Caribbean cultural context of the zombie. The creator of the zombies does link to the fact that Haiti was a French colony as he, Priest Tsiang (William Cromwell), is a chaplain of a French Colonial Regiment (though of Asian origin, so a tenuous link). There was a constant shift in how the zombie was created during this decade that was to continue into

the 1940s. The zombie appeared as the resurrected dead, the mind-controlled human or the scientifically created monster, always mute.

Ouanga (George Terwilliger, 1936) was a British production in the sense that it was an American backed picture produced in Britain. The story was based around a plantation owner, Klili (Fredi Washington), who is also a Voodoo priestess. When she discovers that her neighbour, Adam (Philip Brandon), (whom she desires) becomes engaged to Eve (Marie Paxton) she sends a ouanga to cast a death spell on his fiancée. When this fails to work she sends two zombies to kidnap Eve and return her for a sacrificial Voodoo ceremony. The zombies are not menacing in any way as they walk silently without threat, and the Voodoo dialogue is limited. There is an attempt to link the *Ouanga* Voodoo with Haiti; the film is set on a plantation called "Paradise Island" in the West Indies and within the film there is a written narration that informs the viewer: "After a visit to New York Adam Maynard starts back to his Haitian Plantation." This film was remade for the race movie circuit under the new title *The Devil's Daughter* (Arthur Leonard, 1939). The only Voodoo remake to date, *The Devil's Daughter* had an all-black cast and yet, sadly, it failed to improve on *Ouanga.* In many ways it was more misrepresentational of Voodoo than the previous film. The film was set in Jamaica and interestingly Voodoo was changed to Obeah, the syncretic religion of Jamaica. There is an apparent fear of zombiefication; the character of servant Percy Jackson (Hamtree Harrington) believes his soul is being protected by having it transferred into a pig which he then guards. The transfer of the soul is completed with a fake ceremony run by the character of Sylvia (Ida James). The religion is here once again dismissed as superstition and shown to be fraudulent, along with the zombies. The zombies in this movie are once again largely non-threatening, silent but feared.

THe ZoMbie in THe 1940s

The figure of the zombie continued to shift away from the Vodou and Haitian origins as it entered the 1940s. It had been contextualized and had also featured as a method of mind-control during the 1930s within the few movie productions to feature zombies in this decade. During the 1940s the zombie increasingly became a metaphor for the horrors and fears of society. It remained a mute creature, devoid of the ability to think or act independently, and allowed the movie producers the diversification away from Haiti and Voodoo and into new realms of creation.

The first zombie film of the 1940s was *The Ghost Breakers* (George Marshall, 1940) which featured the comic talents of Bob Hope. Brian Senn suggests that the film has "proven itself to be one of the funniest horror-comedies of all

time" (1998: 232). Although the Voodoo and zombie content is minimal, there are some comedic moments that highlight the zombie's presence in its sparse appearance. The zombie, played by Noble Johnson of *King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933), has a brief appearance before being locked away. There is a description of zombies within the narrative when the character of Carlson states, "A zombie has no will of its own. You see them sometimes, walking around blindly with dead eyes, following orders, not knowing what they do, not caring," to which Hope replies "You mean like Democrats?" This is an interesting remark, as America had a Democratic President at this time, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had received little opposition in the run up to his election. The zombie did lend itself to being a comedic character. The humorous narratives could be directed at the benign zombie presence, the "straight man" necessary to any comedy narrative.

Monogram Pictures was the most prolific of the studios during the 1940s to contribute to the genre, producing three Voodoo films between 1941 and 1946. The subject matter of these films varied but was based around a central Voodoo theme. The first of this decade, *King of the Zombies* (Jean Yarborough, 1941) reflected the socio-political climate of this era and tells a tale of a Nazi attempting to create a zombie army by using the power of a Voodoo priestess. He is eventually thwarted by the British. It is difficult to view this movie as a serious horror effort due to the number of comedic lines. It utilized a similar storyline to the 1936 movie *Revolt of the Zombies* (Victor Halperin, 1936) with the attempted creation of a zombie army. The zombies are again mind-controlled here, rather than the living dead.

White Zombie was one of the best Voodoo films ever made because it illustrated the critical potential for this sub-genre of horror, another film in this vein is 1943s *I Walked with a Zombie*. Val Lewton ran RKO's horror unit for three years between 1942 and 1945 producing some of the best films of the decade. His first, very successful, film *Cat People* (1942) was followed by *I Walked with a Zombie*. Both films were directed by Jacques Tourneur and the team of Lewton and Tourneur was a formidable force in the 1940s cinematic industry. Lewton had integrity and believed in the films he was making so when he was informed by the RKO executive, Charles Koerner, that his second feature was to be based on an *American Weekly* article called *I Walked with a Zombie* he reportedly was dismayed (see Seigel, 1973). Lewton had worked with David O. Selznick from 1933 as story editor, writing scenes for films including *Tale of Two Cities* (Jack Conway, 1935) and *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) before moving to RKO in the 1940s. Lewton did not wish to compromise his integrity and so decided that if he had to make the film he would base it on Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Although based on the Brontë novel the story was reworked extensively and bears little resemblance to its inspiration. His variation on the material may

have been an inspiration for the future response to *Jane Eyre* by Jean Rhys's postcolonial interpretation in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966).

The narrative of *I Walked with a Zombie* is based around the arrival on a Caribbean island of a nurse, Betsy (Frances Dee), who has been employed to take care of plantation-owner Paul Holland's (Ton Conway) wife, Jessica (Christine Gordon), who is described as a "mental case." Jessica had fallen in love with her husband's half brother, Wesley Rand (James Ellison). Voodoo is an integral part of the story from the outset. Betsy is soon made aware that Jessica has been turned into a zombie and is encouraged by the maid to seek help at a Voodoo ceremony. Betsy takes Jessica to the ceremony and the journey features visual Voodoo elements. There is a sacrificial goat suspended from a tree and the striking, staring figure of Carrefour (Darby Jones), a black zombie who is guardian of the crossroads, and who lets them pass without incident. The sacrificial goat seen hanging from a tree in this section of the film bears a striking resemblance to one of the photographs in the 1931 publication *The White King of La Gonave* (Faustin Wirkus), a book which would have been in wide circulation when *I Walked with a Zombie* was made and one that is based on the American Occupation of Haiti.

At the ceremony Betsy finds Jessica's mother-in-law, Mrs. Rand (Edith Barrett), exploiting the beliefs of the locals by posing as *Damballah*, one of the Voodoo spirits. Jessica is subsequently proven to be a zombie when she is stabbed but fails to bleed. The Voodooists wish to rescue Jessica from her state and they send Carrefour to return her to the ceremony but Mrs. Rand intervenes. It then transpires that it was Mrs Rand who was responsible for the zombiefication of Jessica, having held her responsible for strife between her sons. The zombie here is, again, the result of a curse and not of the reanimated dead. The film features the iconic figure of a Voodoo doll being used to draw Jessica back to the ceremony, the doll is seen with a string around it and as it is pulled Jessica rises and heads back to the Voodooists. It becomes clear that the intention of the Voodooists was to end the zombie curse on Jessica, rendering them a mysterious but ultimately benevolent force. This is achieved by the use of the Voodoo doll: when the Bokor (the Voodooist who practices the dark side of the religion) is seen at the ceremony piercing it with a needle, Wesley Rand is seen stabbing Jessica (and so ending the curse). These actions render the supernatural implications ambiguous. Wesley could be viewed as much Jessica's deliverer as the Bokor. Wesley carries Jessica's corpse into the ocean watched by Carrefour, and when both bodies are washed up it leaves Paul and Betsy free to pursue their developing relationship.

This is one of the most atmospheric films ever made in the horror genre, and undoubtedly one of the strongest movies on Voodoo. Lewton meticulously created the sets and employed Voodoo experts such as LeRoy Antoine to advise on authenticity as he had written a book on Haiti in 1938, *The Voice of Haiti*. Voodoo is treated sensitively for the most part in the film without

human sacrifice or overzealous dancers; it is shown as a religion integral to the lives of the inhabitants on this island in the Caribbean. Siegel (1973) writes of the research that was undertaken for *I Walked with a Zombie*, commenting that Lewton found every book he could on the subject to ensure the cast and crew had a basic (although a somewhat biased) knowledge of Voodoo. This film had good intentions and put the mechanisms in place to present a serious representation of Voodoo.

Unfortunately, as was reflective of the time, there were a number of elements maintaining the "Us" and "Them" aspects found in *White Zombie*. Mrs Rand, a medical doctor, displays disdain for the Voodooists and demeans their beliefs; she pretends to be the voice of a spirit presenting them as gullible which does momentarily undermine the otherwise positive representation of Voodoo. There is, however, a refreshing representation of the zombies in this film. Carrefour is a docile black zombie who is not feared and Jessica is a cursed white woman turned into a zombie, again, not feared, as would be the case in Haiti.

The tag line for *I Walked with a Zombie* was "SHE'S ALIVE . . . YET DEAD! SHE'S DEAD . . . YET ALIVE!" with no mention of Carrefour; instead the emphasis was on what Voodoo had done to the "beautiful white woman," which shows no real diversion from the years of prejudice prior to this production. Throughout the film Carrefour does not look or "gaze" at the white characters, but fixes his gaze somewhere beyond them. Both of these points emphasise the relations of power explored by Foucault ([1972–1977] 1988), that there is a system of domination and still a real possibility of resistance. As bell hooks (2008) explores, "slaves were punished for 'looking' and so this power/domination [within *I Walked with a Zombie*] exists within societal viewing, emphasising the fact that most black people would only 'gaze' at whites on screen and that white audiences would not wish to empathise with the black zombie" (2008: 198).

This film was followed later in the decade by *Zombies on Broadway* (Gordon Douglas, 1945) which was made as a "comedy" parody of *I Walked with a Zombie*. RKO had made large profits with the earlier film and decided to exploit this success with another zombie venture that introduced audiences to the comedy duo of Alan Carney and Wally Brown. RKO decided to use some of the same characters from *I Walked with a Zombie* to play upon the earlier film's successes. Darby Jones returned as an imposing zombie, the calypso singer Sir Lancelot sang the same tune with different lyrics and the film was set on the same fictional Caribbean island. The narrative is much different with the two main characters seeking a "real" zombie for a publicity stunt. The limited presence of Bela Lugosi as a "mad doctor," Professor Paul Renault, lifts this film but the Voodoo content is minimal, focusing more on the creation of zombies rather than placing them within their cultural origin. Lugosi's character has set up a zombie-producing company on a Caribbean

Island which is where the two comedic leads are heading. There is one ceremonial sequence which promises to be an atmospheric representation but unfortunately it is overshadowed by the "comedy." Brown and Carney are in blackface disguise, falling over and generally distracting from the narrative and zombie content. The title of this film was changed for British audiences to *Loonies on Broadway*. According to Senn, this was because the British "frowned on horror" during World War II (1998: 79).

Monogram also produced a zombie film called *Bowery at Midnight*, directed by Wallace Fox in 1942. This film features Bela Lugosi as two characters, a gangster and a psychologist. As a murderous gangster, he hides his victims' bodies in the Bowery Mission unaware that his sidekick is reanimating the dead but there is no mention of Voodoo or Haiti. The zombies in this movie are the resurrected dead rather than mind-controlled hoards. Monogram's *Voodoo Man* (William Beaudine, 1944) continues with the zombie theme, with a narrative that revolves around Bela Lugosi as a "mad doctor" again, Dr Richard Marlowe, who is kidnapping young women in an attempt to restore life to his zombiefied wife, Evelyn (Ellen Hall), through a ceremonial chant. There is only one zombie in this production and that is the white wife of Lugosi's character.

Val Lewton went on to produce one of the last zombie films of the 1930s and 1940s for RKO with the 1945 film *Isle of the Dead*. This film rejected the association of zombies with Voodoo in favor of the more sensational; it links zombies with a vampiric demon. The island of the film was based on the painting of the same name by Arnold Böcklin and provided a haunting backdrop. This painting has been inspirational throughout cultural production as well as for RKO's film, as it inspired Sergei Rachmaninov's (1908) twenty-one-minute symphony and the 1963 novel by Roger Zelazny, all taking the same title.

Monogram went on to produce *The Face of Marble* (William Beaudine, 1946), a movie that combines science and Voodoo with experimental ways of raising the dead, arguably the last of the 1940s zombie offerings. By the mid-1940s, cinematic horror productions were in decline with no further representations of Voodoo or zombies for over a decade. This could arguably be a response to World War II, or what was perceived of World War II audiences, especially as the British were thought to be too sensitive for horror at this time.

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The zombies of the 1930s were grounded initially in a Caribbean cultural context and it was this integrity that producers such as Val Lewton wished

to explore during the 1940s. The zombie of the 1940s diversified to become a metaphor for the horrors of war and was in keeping with the cultural context of the 1940s in their lack of voice and agency. The horror within these zombie films came from the Caribbean cultural origin; it was embedded in the fear of the other, the exotic finding its way from over "there" to "here." The American Occupation of Haiti (1915–1934) and the literary publications it inspired would have strengthened the idea of the exoticism and of the old-world superstitions of Haiti within the mind of the audiences.

Despite a number of movies showing the zombies retaliating towards their zombie master, the zombie maintained its persona as a slow moving, mute creature. The zombies that were able to retaliate were those created by mind-control but while under control of a master they were not able to act independently.

The post-war 1940s represented a decline in the kinds of horror monsters that had featured predominantly during the depression and war years perhaps because of the real-life horrors that were unfolding. The death toll from the war totaled millions, the Nazi holocaust and atomic bombing of Japan provided new terrors, all of which impacted on the production output from Hollywood. America still led the movie industry, and although it was encountering an economic boom, there were other tensions, especially with the Soviet Union who were now a nuclear force. The focus of American fear had shifted; the horror film was being replaced or hybridized with the new genre of science fiction.

There was also an impact from what is now known as "The Paramount Case" of 1948. This was the US Supreme Court decision that the five big Hollywood studios had been monopolizing movie theatres and movie distribution to the detriment of their competitors. Following the box-office success of the mid-forties, audiences began to decline in the post-war years. In the late 1940s television broadcasting began with American households embracing this new technology into the 1950s. The American family was less likely to go out to the cinema with less disposable income and they now had entertainment at home. This meant that fewer films were being released and the monster horrors of the 1940s were no longer relevant to the society facing nuclear and perceived alien attack.

This was an important time in the evolution of the cinematic zombie. It firstly contextualized the zombie within its Caribbean culture and then began to explore the idea of the zombie as metaphor. The movies made during the war years of the 1940s exploited the fear of the Nazi regime, of zombie armies and mind control. The productions of Lewton gave the zombie credibility and substance, lending his own integrity to the zombie.

The fact that the zombie was contextualized in early cinematic representations gave it credibility and strength and it could be argued that the removal

of its origins led to the cinematic demise of the zombie in the 1940s. That was until its reinvention decades later when in 1968 George A. Romero created the cannibalistic mindless killers that we know as zombies today in the zombie film *Night of the Living Dead*. It was Romero's revival of the zombie genre that emphasizes the importance of the zombie within the 1930s and 1940s horror movies. The zombies in *Night of the Living Dead* appear in a "hypnotic trance" which is the same as those in both *White Zombie* and *I Walked with a Zombie*. Romero's zombies gain strength in numbers and become a revolutionary force, the intention of narratives such as in *Revolt of the Zombies* and *King of the Zombies.* The zombie of the 1940s led the way for the decades that followed, despite its temporary demise.

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1. A Bokor is a Houngan or Mambo, a Priest or Priestess within the Vodou religion who is believed to practice both light and dark magic. Bokors are understood to be able to create zombies.

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